

IOWA ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT (IAA)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

2007-2008

1. **What is an alternate assessment?** Generally, an alternate assessment is understood to mean an assessment designed for those students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who are unable to participate in general large-scale assessments (ITBS/ITEDS) used by a local school district or State, even when accommodations are provided. The alternate assessment provides a mechanism for students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities, to be assessed on the same content standards for all students. The proficiency determinations for students in the alternate assessment are based on alternate achievement standards.
2. **Is parental permission required for students with disabilities to participate in the Iowa Alternate Assessment process?** Not directly. Parents are members of the IEP team will be involved in IEP team decisions on how an individual student will participate in accountability assessment programs.
3. **Do the IAA rating scales need to be given to the parents?** No. However, the teacher should review the completed rating scales with parents.
4. **Should the rating scales be placed in the student's cumulative folder?** No. Only the proficiency scores should be placed in the cumulative folder.
5. **What content areas and grades does the IAA assess?** Reading is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Math is assessed at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Science is assessed at grades 5, 8, and 11.
6. **Do we need to assess students with the IAA who are in grades kindergarten, 1, 2, 9, 10, and 12?** No, unless the local school district gives a district wide assessment to students in those grades. In that case, the IAA must be given. Results of the assessment do not need to be shared with the State but utilized by the local school district.
7. **Can the IEP be used as the alternate assessment?** NCLB in Non-Regulatory Guidance to states is quite clear. The IEP cannot be used as an alternate assessment.
8. **Should students who could be predicted to be unsuccessful in the general district-wide assessment for any reason (s) (e.g., low academic skills, refusal to participate meaningfully) participate in the IAA?** No, only students who meet all of the components of the IAA Participation guidelines can be included in the alternate assessment.
9. **Are functional and access skills on student's IEPs measured in the IAA?** The focus of the alternate assessment is on academics as represented by the Iowa Core Content Standards and Benchmarks.

10. **Can a student participate in the IAA in one content area and participate in the ITBS in another content area?** Yes. Students who can meaningfully participate in any portion of the general assessment should do so.
11. **How is the above decision represented in the student's IEP?** Page G allows for a complete description of how the student is being assessed. This will assist parents to understand how their child will participate in district-wide assessments. On page G, there are actually places for 2 codes to be entered for a student, however the reporting requirement has been that regardless of a second code, if there is an alternate assessment given for either of the content areas, what we must report is that the student is taking an alternate assessment. So when there are two codes entered on Page G, if either of the codes is an A for alternate assessment, that code will appear on the left side of the alternate assessment section of the Required System Data on the Page A screen.
12. **What does 1% of the alternate assessment mean?** NCLB does not limit the percent of students able to take the alternate assessment. The IEP team decides a student's participation. Any student taking the alternate assessment is counted in the participation rate. However, you can only use a maximum of 1% of the IAA proficient scores at the district level toward meeting district adequate yearly progress (AYP). The 1% refers to the percent of students (in all tested grades combined) taking the alternate assessment that may be able to be counted as proficient for AYP purposes. There is no limit at the building level.
13. **What does a district do if they are over the 1% limit?** The Department will contact the district and send them a 1% exemption request form.
14. **For accountability purposes, how are home-schooled students, foster care students, out of state placements, and residential placements treated in the IAA?** Home School – These students fall under their own rules and regulations associated with competent private instruction. They are not counted as full time equivalency (FTE) by the local school district and would not be a part of the district's local accountability system. Foster Placement – These students have been placed by the court system and their scores would roll up to the state level. Out of State Placements – This would be on a case-by-case basis. The most likely scenario would be that they were placed by the court system out of state. More than likely these students would not be counted in the local district's accountability system. If the district was a part of the decision to send a student out of state then that sending district must make sure the student is tested (other state's test not the IAA) and the scores sent back to the district. In-State Private Residential Placements – if a local district was involved in this decision and a 28E agreement was executed, then the score(s) for that student in the residential facility should come back to the sending district. If a parent made a unilateral decision or open enrolled to this facility then the district educating that student would keep the score in that district.
15. **Are students in accredited nonpublic schools included in AYP?** Nonpublic school students, even if they are shared time, are not included in AYP decisions.
16. **How many days can a student miss school to not be considered for a full-academic year?** If the student was enrolled on the first day of the testing period the previous year and is still enrolled on the first day of testing for the current

school year, full academic year applies. Only if the student was dropped from the enrollment rolls of the school or district is the student considered not enrolled for the full academic year.

17. **What is the testing period for the IAA?** The beginning of school to March 31st.
18. **If a new student moves or transfers into my class, do I need to conduct the IAA?** Do what you can. The student would count as participating in your district's data. The student would not count toward full academic year and his/her score would not count toward proficiency. If the student transferred from another Iowa school district, try to obtain what this district did for the IAA process.
19. **What does grade mean?** It means the grade the student is currently in.
20. **We do not use grades but group students according to their ages?** You must identify a grade for each student based on the ages of non-disabled students in particular grades.
21. **Can parents refuse to have their child included in the alternate assessment?** All students must be assessed under NCLB regulations, if not in the general statewide assessment, the alternate assessment. So the answer is no. However, if the local school district has a policy to allow parent requests to not test students, this policy should extend to parents of children with disabilities. Parents of enrolled students need to know that if their child does not take the alternate assessment, they are counted as exclusions under NCLB, which could eventually cause problems for districts in making AYP.
22. **Can one piece of evidence cover one or more rating scale items?** Yes. Please make sure when you label the evidence that you identify which rating scale items are covered.
23. **Do my districts standards and benchmarks need to align to the rating scale items?** No. The Department has already aligned the rating scale items with the state's Core Content Standards and Benchmarks (CCSBs) and districts have attested that their standards include the CCSBs.
24. **Should the Department be informed when a student moves in or out of a district or transfers to another building in the district?** Yes, please use the Department form provided.
25. **What is the process for a medical exemption or exclusion?** This is handled on an "appeal" basis. If a school or district misses AYP based on a student or students who have been unable to participate in the assessment due to a significant medical emergency, district personnel can contact tom.deeter@iowa.gov for assistance regarding what to do.